Today we're going to pull a giant switch on the wall and activate powerful generators, which will create a mysterious force field around us and cause us all to disappear. For we're going to discuss the perennially silly "Philadelphia Experiment."

The story goes that in October of 1943, at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, an experiment was conducted aboard a US Navy Cannon-class destroyer escort called the USS Eldridge, number DE-173. The experiment involved the creation of a force field which rendered the ship invisible both to the eye and to radar. The experiment was witnessed by hundreds, possibly thousands, of sailors both ashore and on other ships nearby. Unfortunately, there were severe side effects to the crew on board ship. Some were found materialized inside the metal of the ship, others were never seen again, and still others were driven insane or plagued for years by mysterious cases of phasing in and out of existence. In typical Navy fashion, everything has been denied.

None of the above ever actually happened. What follows, did actually happen.

The secret of the mysterious experiment and its terrible aftermath was kept for 12 years, until one day when Morris Jessup, the author of a book about UFO's, was unexpectedly summoned to the US Navy's Office of Naval Research. The ONR had received, in the mail, a copy of Jessup's UFO book, filled with handwritten annotations. The notes were all in the same handwriting, but in three characters, in three colors of ink. The notes revealed all the details of the Philadelphia Experiment, and the ONR wanted to know if Jessup knew anything about who might have written these notes and sent the book to them.

Jessup recognized the crazy handwriting immediately. He had received a series of letters from a man calling himself Carlos Allende, who claimed to have witnessed the experiment from aboard a merchant marine ship nearby, the SS Andrew Furuseth. Jessup had dismissed Allende as a crackpot — among Allende's claims was that Albert Einstein had personally spent several weeks mentoring him on subjects such as invisibility and faster-than-light travel. Several copies of the annotated book were produced, and the rest is history: The Philadelphia Experiment story became part of the fabric of pop culture.

Robert Goerman, a researcher of the paranormal and a friend of mine, noticed that the return address of Allende's original mailing to the ONR came from his own home town, New Kensington, Pennsylvania. He had spent some time putting together the history of the Philadelphia Experiment story and in 1979, found to his great surprise that Carlos Allende, whose real name was Carl Allen, was the son of a close family friend. Over time, Goerman filled in the blanks and presented the complete case in magazine articles and on television shows such as History's Mysteries, Unsolved Mysteries, and The Unexplained — three show titles which by themselves lend far too much credence to Carl Allen's stories. Carl Allen was something of the dark horse of the family, a creative and imaginative loner, notorious for annotating anything and everything in the house, and sending bizarre writings and claims to everyone in the family for any occasion. Goerman also assembled all of the facts of the USS Eldridge: little things, like the ship was nowhere near Philadelphia when the experiment happened, the ship had detailed corroborated records for the normal duties that it was in fact performing at the time, and that nobody who had ever been a crewman on board the ship knew anything about any experiment. The Eldridgehad been launched only two months before the experiment, and you'd think that if it was hosting Albert Einstein and the most amazing experiment in history, somebody would have known about it. Without exception, every single fact that Carl Allen presented as evidence of the Philadelphia Experiment has been easily proven to be a complete fabrication.

And therein lies the problem. The trouble with discussing government conspiracies is that the believers generally refuse to accept the factual evidence, because it becomes part of the conspiracy. It's a bit like having a debate about Creationism: believers simply say "God did it" and it's a matter of faith, not of evidence or fact. If the government is trying to cover something up, every falsified claim becomes evidence for the conspiracy. In summary, there is no amount of evidence that can be compiled that will be accepted by a conspiracy theorist. In the conspiracy theorist's mind, evidence against is actually evidence for.

Among this schizophrenic evidence is the US Navy's reply to the Philadelphia Experiment story, which is available online at https://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq21-1.htm. As you might surmise, it simply says that they have no idea what this guy could be talking about, here's where both ships were and what they were doing at the time, and here are the statements from their officers. It's an entertaining report, but predictable.

Interestingly, there are some question marks left standing about the Philadelphia Experiment. As you might expect, two or three veterans of the Eldridge and the USS Engstrom, which was once moored alongside the Eldrige in 1943, have claimed to be a guy whom Allende saw disappear in a bar or who have found themselves transported across dimensions. It should be noted that such claims were made well after the Philadelphia Experiment became a pop-culture phenomenon, and in more than one case it turned out that these guys were not actually veterans at all. A more interesting question comes from the very genesis of the story, when the Navy ONR first summoned Morris Jessup to their office to talk about the strangely annotated book. If there was nothing in those annotations of genuine interest to them, why did they call? Who knows. Goerman suggested that these ONR officers did this on their own time out of personal intrigue, or that some of the allusions in the annotations were similar to actual Navy research and the ONR was simply being responsible at following every lead. Conspiracy theorists maintain that this proves Allen's annotations must have been true. Whatever the truth, I happen to love that this story has this annoying little footnote that can't be easily explained away. I love a good mystery and I remember a streak of disappointment when Goerman's debunking of the case was laid out before me — like most people I'd done no thorough research of my own and only knew what the average moviegoer knows about the Philadelphia Experiment. Intellectually I know the story is silly, but I still love that little loose end. Carl Allen may have been a prankster, but I thank him for making the century just that little bit more interesting.

Popularized by the 1984 film, a bizarre low-budget sequel, and a 2012 Syfy channel movie, tales of the Philadelphia Experiment involves covert U.S. Navy operations that led to time travel, teleportation, and mangled flesh.
According to urban legends, two separate and completely different Philadelphia Experiments took place. Both, however, involved the same vessel, the USS Eldridge. What happened in each of these alleged experiments, and what evidence is there to support the rumors?

Two separate sets of bizarre events make up the "Philadelphia Experiment." Both revolve around a Navy Destroyer escort, the USS Eldridge, with the events taking place on two separate days in the summer and fall of 1943.
In the first experiment, an alleged method of electrical field manipulation allowed the USS Eldridge to be rendered invisible on July 22, 1943 in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The second rumored experiment was the teleportation and small-scale time travel (with the ship sent a few seconds in the past) of the USS Eldridge from the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard to Norfolk, Virginia, on October 28, 1943.
Horrible tales of mangled seamen and sailors stuck within the metal of the USS Eldridge often accompany this experiment, with the USS Eldrigereappearing seconds later in the waters around Philadelphia.
Recitation of the events surrounding the second Philadelphia Experiment often include a cargo and troop transport vessel, the SS Andrew Furuseth. The lore of the second experiment claims those on board the Andew Furuseth viewed the USS Eldridgeand it's crew as they teleported into Norforlk momentarily before the ship returned to the waters of Philadelphia.

Prior to the mid-1950s, no rumors of bizarre activity surrounded any teleportation or invisibility experiments in North America during the 1940s, let alone in the area surrounding Philadelphia.
Carl Meredith Allen, using the alias Carlos Miguel Allende, sent a series of letters to astronomer and writer Morris K. Jessup. Jessup authored several early UFO books including the mildly successful The Case For The UFO. Allen claimed to be on the SS Andrew Furusethduring the second experiment, witnessing the USS Eldridge emerge in the waters of Norfolk and quickly disappear into thin air.
Carl Allen supplied no proof to verify what he claimed to witness on October 28, 1943. He did win the mind of Morris Jessup, who began to champion Allen's view of the Philadelphia Experiment. Jessup, however, died four years after his first contact with Allen from an apparent suicide.
Moving a ship weighing several thousands tons leaves an inevitable paper trail. On the date of the Philadelphia "Invisibility" Experiment, July 22, 1943, the USS Eldridge had yet to be commissioned. The USS Eldridge spent the day of the alleged teleportation experiments, October 28, 1943, safely within a New

York harbor, waiting to escort a naval convoy to Casablanca. The SS Andrew Norfolkspent October 28, 1943, sailing across the Atlantic Ocean en route to the Mediterranean port city of Oran, further discrediting Carl Allen's comments.

And in the early 1940s, the Navy did conduct experiments to make naval vessels "invisible" in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyards, but in a different manner and with a completely different set of desired results.

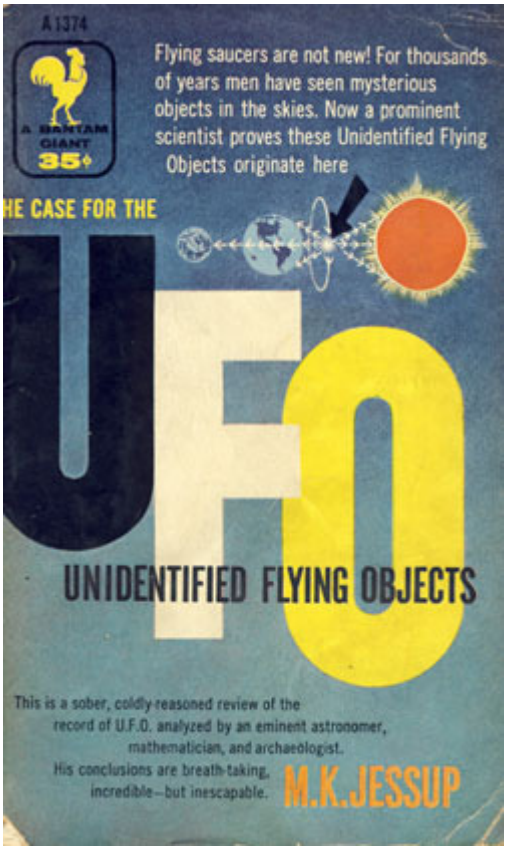
In these experiments, researchers ran an electric current through hundreds of meters of electrical cable around the hull of a ship to see if they could make the ships "invisible" to underwater and surface mines. Germany deployed magnetic mines in naval theatres — mines that would latch on to the metal hull of ships as they came near. In theory, this system would make the ships invisible to the magnetic properties of the mines.

Sixty years later, we are left without a shred of credible evidence for the Philadelphia Experiment(s), yet rumors persist. If you are still unconvinced, think of the situation from a different viewpoint. No incident, regardless of the horrific nature, would stall development of teleportation technology if the military believed it feasible. Such a resource would be an invaluable front line weapon in war and the backbone of many commercial industries, yet decades later, teleportation is still caged within the realm of science fiction.

In 1951, the United States transferred the Eldrige to the country of Greece. Greece christened the ship the HS Leon, using the vessel for joint U.S. operations during the Cold War. The USS Eldridge met an unceremonious end, with the decommissioned ship sold to a Grecian firm as scrap after five decades of service.

In 1999, fifteen members of the USS Eldridge crew held a reunion in Atlantic City, with the veterans bemoaning the decades of questioning surrounding the vessel they served on.

Top image from the 1984 movie Philadelphia Experiment. Images courtesy of theNational Archives and Records Administration, Bantam Books, and 20th Century Fox.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